



The Oak Tree
Nursery School

AN INTRODUCTION

The Oak Tree Nursery School is an independent day nursery and pre-school which lies on the edge of Whitchurch in Hampshire. We opened in January 2004 and have full Ofsted registration for 85 children between 3 months and 5 years.

Our ethos and approach

Creating the right environment

We believe children thrive when they are in a welcoming, stimulating environment where they have the freedom to make positive choices and learn through active play, both indoors and out.

Our setting has a wide range of equipment to support children's play. We choose toys which encourage children to develop their creativity and avoid toys which are too prescriptive in their use. We ensure children are prepared for life in the modern world and our equipment includes computer tablets for children to play educational games, with the support of adults to learn more about the world.

Fresh air and healthy food

Children are helped to develop habits that are important for a happy and healthy lifestyle. The children play outside in the grounds all year round – equipped with Wellington boots and waterproofs in the winter and sun hats and sun cream in the summer. This makes for very hungry children who are given a wide range of healthy food throughout the day, which our cook prepares on the premises.

Making friends and learning good manners

Social and emotional development is key to a child's confidence and happiness and we help children learn self-discipline and respect for others. We always praise co-operation and turn taking and support children to manage their feelings using a kind and empathetic approach.

Supporting adults

Adults play a vital role in supporting children's learning and development. Our team is committed to working with parents and other childcare professionals (where appropriate) to ensure the best care for each individual child.

We are committed to ongoing training of our practitioners; our training and curriculum programme is led by an Early Years Professional (a post-graduate qualification) and we are committed to continuous professional development for all staff.

We primarily recruit full time members of staff and do not employ staff from temping agencies to cover staff sickness and holidays. Instead we maintain higher staffing levels throughout the year to cover staff absence, which ensures the children are always cared for by staff they are familiar with and who will be with them throughout the day.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) - new framework 2021

We follow the government's EYFS curriculum throughout the nursery, which is shaped by the following four overarching principles:

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- Children learn and develop well in an **enabling environment** with teaching and support from adults who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/carers.
- Importance of **Learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates and our support adapts to meet the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

There are seven areas of learning in our educational programme, all of which are important and inter-connected. The prime areas (communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development) are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving. The specific areas (literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design) also strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning.

Children are supported to learn through play. Practitioners liaise closely with parents to consider children's individual needs, interests, and development. They use this information and their ongoing day-to-day observations to continually assess children's stage of development and plan challenging and enjoyable experiences for each child across all the areas of learning. Practitioners are mindful of these three characteristics of effective learning when supporting children's learning:

- **Playing and exploring** – children investigate and experience things; they 'have a go'
- **Active learning** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and thinking critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

The setting and grounds

Set in an acre of land and surrounded by fields on three sides, the nursery gives children plenty of access to fresh air, space and beautiful Hampshire scenery. The children love to watch tractors or see the cows graze in the adjacent fields.

The large garden incorporates a number of different areas which support children's learning and development. These include:

- the under 2s lawn - an enclosed grass area with age-appropriate climbing frames and soft play climbing resources
- the mud kitchen - for creative play with natural materials
- the obstacle/den building zone - to encourage development of gross motor skills and creativity
- the meadow – with tall wildflowers in the spring and summer (excellent for bug hunts!) and lots of space for running throughout the year
- the vegetable patch and sensory herb garden – for our budding gardeners to learn about the natural world and to grow supplies for the kitchen

- the main garden – with its own wooden climbing frame, earth mound, tunnel and pergola, where children enjoy a wide range of activities throughout the year depending upon the season, including ride-on toys and ball play.

All rooms also have their own fully-equipped patio area, which is freely accessed throughout the day and all through the year.

The buildings

The Oak Tree is housed in two purpose-built, pavilion-style buildings in keeping with its rural environment. Lots of full-length windows allow children to enjoy the setting fully, while vaulted ceilings in all the rooms and soothing, natural colours and materials create a clean, bright and airy environment for both children and staff. At all times, we consider how the room looks from the perspective of a child, so there are many display areas at a level where children can appreciate them and many signs, pegs etc. are set at children’s height.

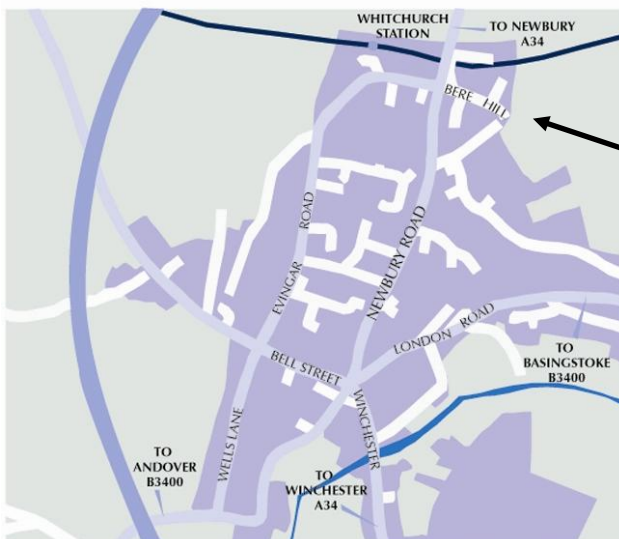
Being developed solely as a nursery school, the buildings offer excellent facilities for children of all ages. There is a fully-equipped baby room with a dedicated sleep area indoors and ‘prammy’ outdoors, to ensure your baby has the chance to rest properly throughout the day.

Location

The Oak Tree is less than five minutes walk from Whitchurch mainline railway station which has a regular service to Basingstoke (around 15 minutes) and London (around 1 hour) as well as to Andover (less than 10 minutes) and Salisbury (around 30 minutes).

There are cycle and buggy shelters as well as on-site dropping off and commuter parking spaces for car users. A bus stop at the end of Bere Hill has a regular service to and from the centre of town.

Whitchurch is just off the A34 and is less than 30 minutes from Winchester and Basingstoke and around 15 minutes from Newbury and Andover by car.





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STRUCTURE OF CARE

Children are cared for in groups according to their age. These are:

- Acorns and Big Acorns – 3 months to 2 years
- Saplings – 2 to 3 years
- Oaks – 3 to 5 years

Acorns

The Acorns have their own dedicated room with nappy changing and bottle preparation facilities. The play space allows for wet and messy play, quiet time and many other activities. Acorns also have their own dedicated outdoor area and the children are able to choose from a wide range of toys to stimulate and interest the under 2s. One of their favourites is the treasure basket which helps babies explore their sense of touch by feeling different textures and materials.

All children have their own bed linen, and are allocated their own cot to ensure they feel at home. We operate a 'fresh air' sleeping policy for all babies in this room which means they can take their daytime naps outdoors, well-protected from the elements. In the summer, they sleep in the garden in prams under the shade of the pergola and in wet weather we use our 'prammery'. In the past, this was common practice for all children and research has highlighted its benefits. The policy is optional and we also have a partitioned quiet sleeping area attached to the Acorns room for babies sleeping indoors.

The structure of the day is informal, allowing activities to be adapted to the requirements of each child. At a very young age, babies' sleep and feeding patterns dictate the format of the day, but as children become older, they gradually start to learn skills of sitting with other children at meal times and for rhymes and stories. They are taught to share toys while playing with others and start learning to do things for themselves.

Big Acorns and Saplings

Big Acorns and Saplings have their own separate areas inside and outside for quiet time and general play. They share the children's toilets. They also enjoy full use of the garden.

Children in these groups start to enjoy a more structured day with set meal and nap times, according to age and requirements. Children are encouraged to become more independent and potty training is encouraged (subject to parents' requirements and each child's readiness).

The rooms are fully-equipped with a home corner, children's library, building blocks and many other toys and equipment.

Oaks

Oaks are based in their own pre-school building which is divided into two rooms of mixed ages. It is fully-equipped with a comprehensive range of play and learning equipment and has its own patio area, complete with water feature, sand pit and digging patches.

Getting ready for school

Children are encouraged to develop their independence to help prepare them for school. This includes learning to put coats and shoes on and off, going to the toilet and nose blowing!

We work with children's future schools to help make the transition to Year R smooth. This includes inviting teachers to Oaks to meet the children; sending our staff to help with transition day at our nearest school so the children have a familiar face to give them confidence; and liaising with children's schools to ensure our teaching practices are compatible.

Languages

A French teacher visits our Oaks room for foreign language sessions designed specifically for nursery age children. The teacher is a native French speaker who uses a mix of activities including songs, games and stories to ensure learning is fun. These sessions are included in your fees.

Forest school

A qualified Forest School teacher runs an off-site Forest School session for the older Oaks children. These sessions offer an extended opportunity to learn in a natural outdoor environment where children are supported to take risks, build confidence in their own physical abilities whilst fostering independence and creativity. There is a high ratio of 1:4 practitioners to children. These sessions are included in your fees.



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MEALS AND SNACKS

Home-style, healthy cooking

We have a dedicated cook who uses fresh, quality ingredients to make delicious meals from scratch. At all times, we avoid foods which are highly-processed and those which are high in salt, refined sugar and excessive fat.

Our menus for all meals, including snacks, are on display in the hall and parents are invited to comment on them.

Working with experts

Our menus are devised with guidance from The Catherine Walker Trust (a national charity which promotes healthy eating) to meet all children's nutritional needs throughout the day. They have also been checked against the School Food Trust's *Eat Better, Start Better* initiative to ensure they maintain the highest standards and we use recipes created by Public Health England for early years settings.

Babies and toddlers

From four to six months old, or otherwise as agreed with parents, children are introduced to simple, smooth purées made from fresh or steamed fruits and vegetables. These may be mixed with baby rice and the child's own (mother's or formula) milk. The purées are made coarser as the children become more used to eating 'solids' and a greater mix of ingredients is introduced as children grow older.

Very young babies are unable to digest protein foods like eggs, cheese, pulses, chicken and fish. These foods are introduced gradually to babies from the age of six months, or otherwise as parent's request. Similarly, in keeping with government health advice, foods containing gluten (from wheat) are not introduced until babies are at least six months old. Parents may wish their child to avoid gluten or any other type of food for up to a year, particularly if their family has a history of allergies. If so, we are happy to accommodate this.

By the time they become toddlers, the children move on to eating finger foods and are helped to develop more independence in their eating so that they can move on to the main nursery menu.

Older children

Whenever they are ready, children may move on to the main nursery menu of:

- **Breakfast** – a choice of, for example, cereals, including, organic puffed rice, wholewheat cereal biscuits, and/or wholemeal toast.
- **Morning snack** – a piece of fresh fruit or raw vegetable such as grapes, kiwi, or sliced red peppers with a small portion of carbohydrate such as bread sticks or rice cakes and/or a small portion of milk based protein such as cheese cubes, fromage-frais or cream cheese. For example hummus, toasted pitta bread and carrot batons.
- **Lunch** – a homemade, two-course hot meal made with fresh and natural ingredients such as beef and butternut squash tagine with couscous followed by rhubarb crumble and custard .
- **Afternoon snack** - a piece of fresh fruit or raw vegetable such as strawberries, blueberries or carrot batons with a small portion of carbohydrate such as crackers or wholemeal pancakes or rice cakes and/or a small portion of milk based protein such as cheese cubes, fromage-frais or cream cheese. For example oat crackers, sugar snap peas and cream cheese.
- **Afternoon tea**- a home-made two-course healthy tea such as 'Frittata' or 'Tomato and lentil soup with soda bread' followed by our own homemade Greek yoghurt with homemade granola.
- **Drinks** –It is our policy to offer children drinks that encourage good dental health; we therefore offer children a choice of milk or water.

Special dietary requirements

We are happy to accommodate children who have special dietary requirements on religious, health or ethical grounds. In each case, we work with parents to ensure we provide a choice of food to meet each child's needs.



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WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

Key person

Each child is assigned a member of our team as his or her key person. The key person monitors each child's progress and ensures records are kept up to date. These records are kept confidentially and parents may access them at anytime they wish. The key person will normally be parents' first point of contact for any questions about their child. Parents are welcome to speak to them – or any other member of our team – at any time.

Room noticeboards and our lending library

Information about the children's activities in Saplings and Oaks is available on the room notice boards, which are updated daily. We believe the learning your child experiences at home is important, so, where appropriate, we give parents ideas of how they can support activities at home and have a range of resources including story sacks, nursery rhyme bags and discovery bags which you can borrow to share with your child out of nursery.

Creating a partnership with you in your child's learning

We consider ourselves partners with you in your child's learning and welcome information about your child's activities at home. This will help us understand them more fully and improve the quality of our planning for their learning journey. Most of our assessment of children's development is ongoing (formative), but periodically your child's key person will reflect with a member of the management team on areas of significant progress and assess whether your child is at the expected level of development. We use a software program called Tapestry to support this and will share the findings with you. This will usually include some photographs of your child at nursery.

Newsletters and notice boards

We issue regular newsletters with updates on nursery life. We also have an Operational notice board which gives parents information about how the setting is run, including an operational plan of which members of staff are working in which room and how many children they are caring for, as well as our formal registration and insurance documentation, plus our rolling menus. A full copy of our up to date policies and procedures is also available beneath this notice board.

Our larger Parent Information board is updated regularly with a wide range of information for parents, including how to keep children safe and healthy, ideas of activities in the area which you can do with your child, and lots of other information to support families.

There is also a display of the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Photographs of the children involved in various activities are used to illustrate how we implement all the elements of the framework.

Parents' evenings

We hold parents' evenings twice a year where parents can talk to their child's key person about his or her development.

Seeking feedback from parents

We are always interested in parents' views of our setting. We contact all parents a few weeks after they have started to check their child has settled well and ask for ideas of how we can improve. This process is repeated after each transition between rooms. Each year, we invite parents to complete a questionnaire to give us feedback and we use these findings to inform our practice in the future.

Parents don't need to wait for a questionnaire to give us their thoughts. Our co-managers and other staff are always available to listen to comments and ideas, and there is a parents' suggestion box in the hall for anyone who would prefer to send a note.



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OUR STAFF

Our team members are selected for their love of working with children. Through formal training and practice they all have a huge amount of experience of caring for children.

Safer recruitment

All applicants to work at the nursery undergo our rigorous recruitment procedure to ensure only suitable candidates are selected. This includes interview with member of the senior management team with Hampshire County Council Safer Recruitment training; thorough scrutiny of experience and references; and a comprehensive induction process.

Qualifications and training

We are committed to keeping a workforce of the highest quality. Our setting has the benefit of an Early Years Professional (a post-graduate qualification) and we encourage all staff to continue with their academic development. We currently have two further members of staff with early years foundation degrees. All room leaders are qualified to NVQ level 3 or above and most other staff are qualified to this level or are on stepping stones towards it. This, combined with a commitment to continuous professional development for all staff, ensures we remain up to date with latest industry best practice.

Key person and consistent staff

We operate a key person system which ensures you and your child has a primary point of contact within the setting.

We are committed to employing permanent members of staff and do not employ staff from temping agencies to cover staff sickness and holidays. Instead we maintain higher staffing levels throughout the year to cover staff absence, which ensures the children are always cared for by staff they are familiar with and who will be with them throughout the day.

Meet the team

Parents who decide to visit us at The Oak Tree will have an opportunity meet the team which will care for their child.

Nursery Manager

Our setting is run by two co-managers, Paris Whitehorn and Darcy Cavill, who are supported by two deputy managers, Chloe Sheridan and Jessica Smith. They all have a wealth of hands on experience working with all age groups within the setting and are passionate about giving children the very best care and learning opportunities.

Owners

Emma Longton and Cathy Saint are owners and directors of The Oak Tree Nursery School. Cathy has Early Years Professional Status.



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SESSIONS AND FEES

The Oak Tree is open 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday throughout the year, **except** for Bank Holidays and five days over Christmas.

Minimum sessions

We offer full day sessions and children are required to attend for a minimum of two days per week.

Allocation of spaces

In order to meet the on-going requirements of our waiting list for families now and in the future, all attendance patterns must include a Monday or Friday. Allocation therefore for two or three days attendance will always include a Monday or Friday.

Christmas closure days

The nursery is closed for five normal working days over the Christmas period. This is in addition to the normal Christmas and New Year Bank Holidays. You are not charged for these five days as your monthly fees are calculated as **51** weeks payment divided by 12 months. These days vary from year to year and are confirmed in the autumn.

Fees

Effective from 1st July 2021:

	Full day	Full week
Under 3s	£70.95	£326.00
3s and over	£64.26	£299.00

Some of these sessions are eligible for Early Years Funding, subject to Hampshire County Council conditions.

What's included in the fees?

The following are included in the session fee:

- All meals. These are:
 - Breakfast
 - Morning snack
 - Lunch
 - Afternoon snack
 - Tea

- The Oak Tree's chosen brand nappies and sun screen.
- French lessons for older children
- Forest school sessions for older children

We ask you to provide formula or breast milk and bottles.

Payment terms

Fees are calculated over 51 weeks of the year and payable calendar monthly in advance of sessions by standing order or faster payments unless other arrangements are made.

All sessions contracted for must be paid for, including those which fall on a Bank Holiday. No reductions are made for family holidays, sickness or other absence. Notice to terminate or change a contracted place is 1 calendar month in writing and full fees are payable during the notice period, whether or not the child attends.

Fees for **additional sessions** are due at the time of booking by bank transfer, cash or cheque made payable to 'The Oak Tree Nursery and Pre-school Ltd'. Early years educational grant cannot be claimed for these sessions due to government funding policy.

Early years educational grant

We are an approved provider of Hampshire County Council's free early years educational grant, for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. We will supply you with all the required information as your child reaches the appropriate age. However, we are happy to answer any queries you may have when we give you a tour of our nursery.



Subject to space and availability your child may attend our setting for free hours only (please see our Admissions and Fee policy available on our website for more information). You will be charged separately for any meals and snacks taken. We pride ourselves on being accessible to all children in the community. If there are any issues financially that prevents your child from attending our setting, please speak to Emma Longton on your tour of the nursery.

Early Years Pupil Premium

For some three and four year old children we are able to claim additional funding of up to £302 per year to support their development, learning and care. For more information on whether your child may be eligible please see our parents notice board, visit: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/childcare/payingforchildcare/freechildcare/earlyyears pupilpremium> or speak to Hilary Bond, Administration Manager.

Registration fee and deposit

A non-refundable registration fee of £45 is payable to register a child at the nursery. If your child is offered a place, a deposit of two weeks fees is due to secure it. The full deposit will be refunded when your child leaves, after a minimum of one calendar month attendance and subject to one month's written notice being given. If you cannot take up your place within a month of your child's agreed start date, your deposit will not be refunded.

Tax Free Childcare

We accept employer childcare vouchers and are also registered for the government's tax-free childcare scheme. For more information on what is the right offer for you, go to: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk